

Create a Communications Strategy

What

An EMS should define the process for proactive internal and external communication. Internal communication should provide information about environmental requirements and voluntary commitments to all employees, on-site service providers, and contractors whose work could affect your ability to meet those requirements and commitments. External communication should provide information on your environmental programs and accomplishments to other stakeholders and include a way to provide feedback. Stakeholders include anyone who has a stake in your facility's environmental performance.

Who

Communications are handled by the CFT member representing the affected area, in coordination with the EMR. Communication of changes to legal and other requirements to employees are handled by the Area or Department Manager.

Appoint a community liaison (for example, the facility manager, supervisor, production supervisor, health, safety and security manager or the EMR) to manage external communications concerning the environmental aspects of your facility. The community liaison is responsible for:

- Responding to inquiries from interested parties and regulatory agencies;
- Sending current copies of the environmental policy to interested parties; and
- Responding to media inquiries.

The EMR, in consultation with the community liaison, determines the need for and preparation of notifications to regulatory agencies on an as needed basis.

See Sample Form 8: Communications Program Matrix, below, for guidance on effective communications for employees, neighbors, and customers.

Sample Form 8: Communications Program Matrix

Stakeholder(s)	Potential Environmental Interest	What We Want to Tell Them	What We Want Them to Tell Us	How We Will Communicate with/Tell Them	When We Will Do It	Person Responsible
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety of workers Protection of the environment Competitiveness 	Environmental policy	How to get it done	Memo, bulletin board, meetings, suggestion box, Intranet	Initial training for new employees, EMS update at annual picnic, as needed via training program for specific workers	EMR, CFT, and training personnel
Neighbors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of facility, near residences Run-off into creek behind wastewater treatment plant 	Environmental policy and EMS plans	Their environmental concerns, particularly regarding planned expansion	Meetings, open house, flyers, suggestion box, Web site	Town meeting in November (for expansion discussion) Annual open house Web site (ongoing)	EMR with communications representative (as appropriate)
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major client considering EMS for suppliers 	Environmental policy and EMS plans	Specific EMS requirements that might ensue	Above, plus inserts in direct mail advertising, or invoices and on our Web site	Ongoing and as billing occurs	Marketing lead and facility president

Why

Internal and external stakeholders can play an important role in developing the facility's EMS. Employees can provide strong support for EMS development. Customers, suppliers, and neighbors also can provide useful contributions. Partnerships with trade associations, suppliers, professional associations, and universities can also help develop your EMS.

Your stakeholders' concerns may be very different from what you expect and may be less difficult to resolve than you think. The only way to find out is to talk with them.

How

Discuss the stakeholders you want to include in your EMS process, the benefits of including stakeholders, and tips for better communication with stakeholders. While employee involvement is critical to your EMS' success, the inclusion of other stakeholders is up to you. You may want to start by communicating with stakeholders who have expressed interest in your facility. To locate additional stakeholders, follow the steps below:

- Ask your employees, including facility managers and public relations personnel;
- Get suggestions from local officials;
- Ask a local planning agency; and/or
- Get input from national advocacy groups regarding local or national groups.

Create a list of everyone who would be interested in your facility's environmental activities and how you can reach them (if you already have established ways of communicating with certain groups, start with those). Then make a decision about where to begin. You can start with staff and later add other stakeholders, if that suits your needs. It's helpful to make your communication list as complete as possible and then pare it down to a manageable size.

When any form of communication is received from a stakeholder about your facility's environmental performance, ensure that the message is immediately forwarded to your EMR. The EMR decides whether and how to respond to the communication. Do your best to respond in kind to all good-faith communications from stakeholders about environmental issues, including complaints, comments, and information requests.